

# I'M LOVIN' IT

*Jerry Healy loves giving back to the community, including the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation*

/Abbie Darst, Program Coordinator

A successful and passionate businessman, Gerald Healy II has made a name for himself across central Kentucky through more than just the 14 McDonald's franchise restaurants he owns and operates. Healy is a community and civic leader with a heart and compassion for people. His business motto, 'To exceed the customers' expectations,' seems to filter into his approach to life in general. Through his support and guidance as a member of the Legion of Highest Commendation and board of directors with the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation, Healy has been crucial to the success of the fund and to the memorial itself, which was recently expanded and relocated. In addition to his work with KLEMF, he is a strong supporter of many charitable organizations, including the Ronald McDonald House. Healy has been married to his wife, Sarah, for 46 years and he has four children and numerous grandchildren.

## What sparked your interest in the McDonald's franchise?

Prior to McDonald's, I was in hospital administration in Madison, Wisconsin, a 350-bed hospital. I had always wanted to own my own business, and I knew that I would never own my own hospital. I'd been in the hospital business for 10 years, five as a management consultant and then five working in administration in Madison. My brother-in-law had gotten a McDonald's in 1973 in Columbus, Indiana and he told me about it and said, 'It's great and with your management background and your community involvement, you're exactly what McDonald's needs.' So my wife and I went down to his restaurant, in Columbus, which is south of Indianapolis, and I spent a long weekend there cooking hamburgers, making shakes and mopping the floor. I found that I just loved it –working with the kids – and so I got back up to Madison and wrote to McDonald's Corporation. They sent me an application and one thing led to another and here I am. I was 38 and, at the time everyone thought I was crazy because I had somewhat of a prestigious position in the hospital field and McDonald's, 33 years ago, was not what it is today. I mean, it was just a hamburger place and it was just starting to break through the surface of becoming a national brand. It was still a little shaky at that time. Everybody thought I'd lost my mind leaving a prominent position to go cook hamburgers – they were wrong.

## How many McDonald's do you own and where are they located?

Our first was in Winchester, which opened April 23, 1974. We also have two in Mount Sterling, one in Owingsville, two in Morehead, three in George- >>



/Photos by Elizabeth Thomas



>> town, Paris has one, Cynthiana has one, Falmouth has one, and Jackson and Stanton each have one. Now, I did have a total of 14 and I still do in a sense, but my son, Kelly, has two of those and my son-in-law Randy has two of those that had been mine. I plan to transfer all of them someday, when I get to the point when I want to retire.

**What aspect do you most enjoy of owning these McDonald's franchises?**

I would have to say that it's people, whether it's the little 3 year old in the lobby eating her happy meal or over at the nursing home talking to someone there on her birthday who's 90 years old. The spectrum goes from a 3 year old to a 90 year old and we deal with all groups of people, from the mayor to the high school maintenance person. When people come into McDonald's, we don't care whether they're the mayor or the governor or who they are, we show them all respect. We work with senior citizens, we work with high schools, we work with grade schools and it's just neat that you get to see every facet of life – people that are old, people that are young, people that are wealthy, people that are on welfare. And it's neat that you have an opportunity to have such a span of dealing with, working with and being friends with such a wide group of people.

**What is it that you spend the majority of your time doing?**

I'm slowing down. I moved to chairman of the board about four years ago and elevated my son up to president of all the restaurants and my son-in-law, Randy Mason, to executive vice president, and that gave me time to slow down and do what I want and pick and choose what meetings I want to go to.

I'm out visiting restaurants as much as I can with Kelly, Randy, Jim Bennett and other people that are key.

And I go to meetings – a whole lot of different things. We have 1,000 employees, so we really are in the people business, whether it's behind the counter or in front of the counter, we're dealing with people all day long. It's interesting, every one of our employees either has a mother or

father or a husband or wife who is interested in their job, so if we hire one person, we're getting two, three or four in the package deal whose interested in their wife's job or their husband's job – why couldn't they do this or why didn't they get that. So we have a wide gate of people we deal with in the employment circle as well.

**Has being involved with McDonald's made it easy for you to be involved in local communities? In what ways?**

Very much so. McDonald's has always had a philosophy, for 50 some years, to give back to the community. And this started in February of 1974, for me, when I got to Winchester two months before the restaurant opened up. I then started to get involved in the community and went to certain meetings. I went to the Chamber of Commerce and introduced myself and tried to meet and become involved with as many people as possible before I even opened the restaurant. That's McDonald's huge, huge philosophy is to give back to the community, whether it be time, money, or whatever it is, to say thank you for the things that they've given to you. And that's what I do. All of our management people do it, our support staff, my son and my son-in-law, the other officers in the corporation are all very, very involved. Whether it is Little League or the church choir or whatever it is, they're involved.

**Why have you have chosen to be so supportive of Kentucky law enforcement and the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation?**

I just have tremendous respect for police officers, for law enforcement officers, whatever area they might be in, and I have the same feeling for firefighters. These are two categories that are so important to our community and taking care of us, our children and grandchildren and yet, my opinion is, they are so little appreciated. I think we should put them where they belong and that's at the top of the pyramid. When I became involved with the group in Richmond, it gave me a great deal of satisfaction and, in a sense, my dreams as a little boy of 5 years old and people asked me what I wanted to be, I said a policeman, and now I have many friends in law enforcement. I didn't make the cut, but at least I know a lot of people that did, and I enjoy it very, very much helping and working with them. I also do what I'm doing with the foundation because of John Bizzack. I've known John and Carole for years. I've thought the world of them, and when he asked me to get involved I said I'd be happy to. And, then, it's like putting one toe in the swimming pool. I can't do that. If I'm going to put a toe in the swimming pool, I've got to jump into the whole thing right in the middle. When John asked

me to do it, I think so much of him as an individual and as a friend that I decided to do it. What I do today with the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation and what I do in the future is a direct result of my friendship, respect and admiration for John Bizzack.

**How do you feel about the new memorial location and the work that was done to expand and relocate the monument?**

I think it is awesome. Relocating the memorial was very, very essential. It gives us more room unfortunately or fortunately. I wish we didn't have a need for room, but we do and it's more accessible to the public. It stands out and it's just something that everyone involved is very, very pleased with.

**How much say did the board have in the relocation, design and look of the monument?**

Don Pendleton and his crew came up with guidelines and recommendations. They were presented to the board and the board gave its input, thoughts and direction. From that, there was board approval given to the project. But Don, Larry Ball and a whole lot of other people – Herb Bowling – they were the quarterbacks, they were the architects for that program and the board just supported their efforts. We gave some input, but they certainly were the ones who were calling the plays and getting the job done.

**In addition to KLEMF, you support various charities and community outreach programs. Why do you feel this involvement is so important and which organizations are you the most passionate about serving/helping?**

Well when it comes specifically to law enforcement and these officers that have lost their lives, anything that we can do for their families, which we can never fill that void, but if we can soften it, or cushion it a little bit and help them along the road, I feel a need to do it – I want to do it. The same thing applies to the Markey Cancer Center at the University of Kentucky. I have done some things with them from time to time, and they're in need of research for cancer. There are people that need certain things and if I can work with an organization that can help fill those needs, I do. I'm active with the Ronald McDonald House in Lexington. I'm a charter member, as well as a lifetime member of their board and they fill a tremendous need as well. They take care of those people that have a family member at one of Lexington's hospitals. The family can stay at the Ronald House versus sleeping on the floor in the waiting room or sleeping in their car or their truck for a week or two weeks or three weeks while their child

is being treated. We now have the Ronald House there and it's a home away from home.

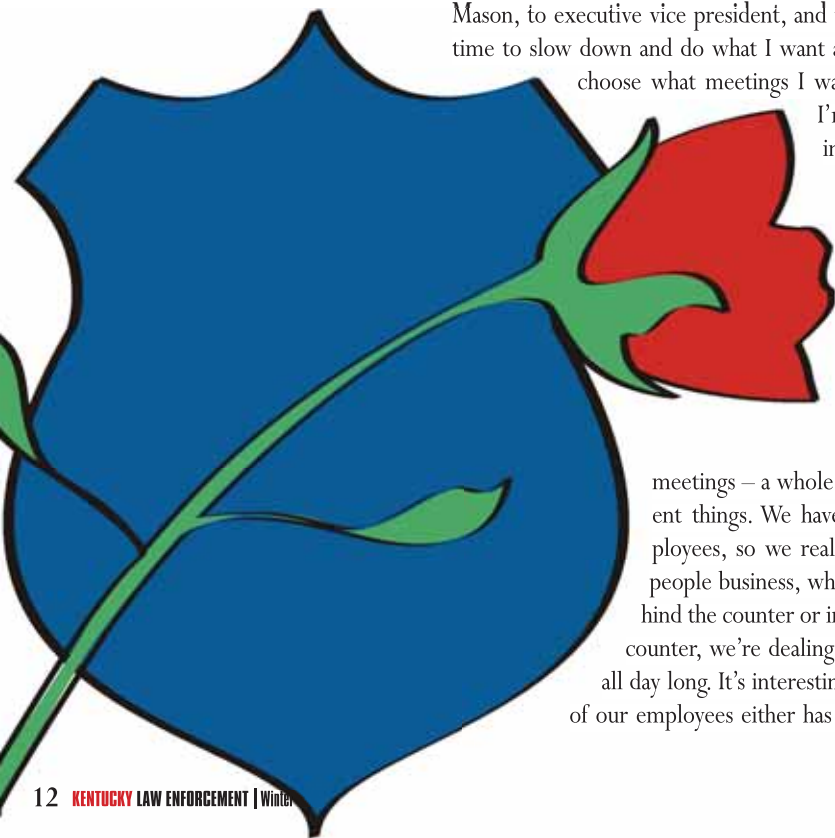
**Specifically, how have you been involved with the Ronald McDonald House?**

A group of female community leaders in Lexington approached some of the owner/operators in the area and said, 'We know that you've thought of the Ronald House, we've thought of it too and would like to join forces and move forward in the possibility of building one.' They did an unbelievable job – the ladies who spearheaded it. I can honestly say that if it hadn't been for that group of women, we probably would not have a Ronald McDonald House here today. The group that spearheaded it, with the owner/operators, has just done a wonderful thing and it still is today – they're still involved.

“ I just have tremendous respect for police officers, for law enforcement officers, whatever area they might be in, and I have the same feeling for fire fighters. ”

**You and your family have traveled around the world. What are some of the most memorable moments and places you have visited?**

My most favorite would probably be the opportunity to take all the children and grandchildren around the world. The highlight was Rome and having an opportunity to see the Holy Father at that time and for the children to see him – Sarah and I had seen him before – but to have the children and grandchildren see him and to be able to arrange for our son and daughter to have an audience with him. The second highlight of that probably would have been to see the Olympics in Australia that year. After Rome we went to China then went to Australia. It was neat to see the Olympics there, to see all the countries of the world in a hundred square miles and watch these people interact, and watch these people talk and compete and go over and congratulate the winner, even though they may have lost by 10 links or whatever it was, they still went and congratulated them. Or the winner went and congratulated the one >>







>> who was second, third or fourth. And to me, that is fantastic to see, this type of relationship between people of the world, first, and then secondly, competitive people of the world. The next one was probably China. China was interesting to all of us because it was so much different than what the grandchildren had ever seen. The language was different, the appearance of the people was different. Their clothing was different. Their food was surely different. I'm not much for raw fish; I call it bait where I come from. Either way, the kids loved it. We were gone about five weeks altogether. Eleven of us took the trip. That was in 2000. Then two years later we went to the winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. It was a great opportunity. I just like watching people, looking at people and listening to them.

#### What types of activities do you and your wife, Sarah, enjoy in your down time?

Traveling is a hobby, and we truly enjoy it. We take the children with us as much as possible whether for a weekend or a week. Secondly, Kentucky basketball takes a lot of our time, for Sarah, me and for the whole family. Basketball is a hobby and, as everyone has said, a way of life in Kentucky. Is there life after basketball? I don't know. But I sure hope there's a basketball court in heaven if I get up there. It's great – we enjoy it, we've been involved in it for many, many years. We were involved in the basketball program all the way back to Joe Hall. And now up to today to Billy Clyde, and it's just fantastic. Tubby was a very dear friend – a very, very, very good friend. We knew him and Donna when they were here as assistants and then he came back as head coach. I hated to see Tubby leave Kentucky, but I personally felt it was the best thing for him.

If you could offer one piece of advice to anyone, young or old, on how to lead a successful, rewarding life, what would it be?

I've been asked that question in the past 15, 20, 25 or 30 times. What is the one factor that might have the greatest impact in your personal life, your community involvement, your business or whatever it may be? If I had to select one word, which I have done in the past, I think that would be passion. John Kennedy had a passion for politics. Norman Vincent Peale had a passion for communications. Vince Lombardi of the Green Bay Packers had a passion for football. I hope and think I have a passion for people. Whether it's laughing, joking and being around them, or whether it's helping someone. It's just as important to help an elderly lady across the street as it is to sit down and talk and visit with them at lunch. I think we all have so much to give in our lifetime, and I don't mean to be preaching, but whatever you do, develop a passion for it. If it's to be the best high school quarterback, then work at it, work at it, work at it. Don't neglect your studies – but develop a passion for whatever it is. Passion to me is an all-encompassing word that describes so many things of success. I have a passion for McDonald's. In the same way I have a passion for Kentucky basketball. I have a passion for my family. Without my wife, Sarah, I wouldn't be where I am today. She was behind me all the time and beside me all the time and because of her enthusiasm and support, we are where we are today – wherever that is. We've been married 46 years. I'm the luckiest guy in the world. How she's put up with me all that long is unbelievable. She's wonderful. J

▲ DOCJT Commissioner John Bizzack; Don Pendleton, KLEMF board member; Jerry Healy; and Larry Ball, KLEMF executive director in front of the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial in Richmond.



■ Training Instructor Tom Blankenship leads the pack of 114 motorcycles and their 149 riders in the 5th Annual Blue Knights Memorial Motorcycle Ride. The ride, which raised \$4,337 for the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation, was held September 8, 2007. An article on the KLEMF annual memorial ceremony is on page 56.